

# Driving for Life

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A Guide  
for Older Drivers  
and their  
Families



# **Driving for Life: A Guide for Older Drivers and their Families**

**D**emographics show we are an aging society. By the year 2020, one of every six Michigan residents, or 1.7 million, will be age 65 or older.

Driving is often seen as the key to independence. However, age alone shouldn't be a factor in deciding whether someone should be driving. Changes in vision, physical fitness or reflexes also influence driving ability.

The Michigan Department of State understands the concerns older motorists face when it comes to driving. We are committed to keeping all motorists licensed for as long as it is safe for them to drive. This brochure will provide:

- A better understanding of the department's role in licensing drivers.
- Suggestions to help older drivers maintain their driving skills.
- Tips about finding alternate transportation once the decision is made to give up driving.

# Maximizing Your “Older Driver Potential”

**W**e all want to maintain our ability to go where we want, when we want, especially as we grow older and enjoy more leisure time. Self-awareness is the key. People who can accurately assess their fitness to drive can adjust their driving habits, and stay safe on the road. With smart self-management, you can retain the independence that comes with driving, while limiting the risks to yourself and others.

## What To Do

- Be aware of your physical limitations and how they may affect your driving.
- Listen to the advice from those who know you best and care about you.
- Discuss driving with your doctor – he or she can evaluate whether any medication you may be taking will affect your driving.
- Refresh your knowledge of safe driving practices and learn about new traffic control and roadway design features through a defensive driving class.
- Plan your route. Drive where you are familiar with the road conditions and traffic patterns.
- Drive during the day and avoid rush hours. Find alternate routes with less traffic.
- Choose a car with an automatic transmission, power steering and power brakes. If you have a physical condition that limits your mobility,

see an occupational therapist or a certified driver rehabilitation specialist to obtain special equipment to make it easier for you to steer and operate the foot pedals.

- Make sure you always wear your glasses and that they are a current prescription.
- If you lose or break your glasses, don't rely on an old pair; replace them right away with your newest prescription. Avoid eyewear with sidepieces that may block your vision.
- See an eye doctor every year to check for cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy and other conditions.
- Begin planning for alternate ways of meeting your transportation needs. Learn about transportation options in your community, and then try them out to see which work best for you.

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# The Department of State's Role

**M**ost older drivers will alter their driving habits accordingly when they detect a problem with their driving. However, it is not always obvious when a health or vision problem, or the effects of medication may be adversely affecting your driving. That's when the actions of loved ones, health care professionals and the Department of State are most vital.

The Department of State is responsible for ensuring that all drivers are able to drive safely. Under Michigan law, the department may require a reexamination if the driver:

- May have a physical or mental condition that impairs his or her ability to drive safely.
- Has been involved in three or more crashes resulting in injury or property damage during the last two years.
- Has been involved in a fatal accident.
- Has 12 or more points on his or her driver record within two years.
- Has been convicted of violating the terms, restrictions or conditions of the driver license.

## Referring An Unsafe Driver

Reporting an unsafe driver may seem drastic, but in some cases it may be the only way to handle a serious situation. Some older drivers do not realize their driving skills have deteriorated and discussing the problem with them may become difficult.

Most referrals to the department are submitted by law enforcement, but referrals are also made by health care professionals, family members, friends or concerned citizens. Any concerns about a family member or friend whose ability to drive safely may be in question, should be submitted to the Department of State.

To refer an unsafe driver to the department:

- Submit a Request for Reexamination form (OC-88). OC-88 forms are available at any Secretary of State branch office, or may be printed from the department's web site at [www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos), or
- Write a letter to the department, requesting a reexamination and explaining the circumstances for the request.

Whether the referral for a reexamination is submitted on an OC-88 form or in a letter, the following information must be included:

- The driver's full name, date of birth, current address and/or driver license number.
- An explanation of why the driver is being referred for a driver reexamination. The Department of State cannot process a request for a reexamination unless specific information indicating that an unsafe driving condition exists is provided.
- Your full name, address, telephone number and signature.

The information provided will remain confidential to the extent permitted by law. The Department of State is unable to act upon anonymous requests for a driver reexamination. Requests for reexamination should be mailed to:

Request for Driver Reexamination  
Michigan Department of State  
PO Box 30640  
Lansing, MI 48909

If a professional review by the department is necessary, the driver will be notified to attend a reexamination within 30 days. The person requesting the reexamination will be mailed an acknowledgement of the request.

## The Reexamination Process

**T**he purpose of the reexamination is to review an individual's driving habits and behaviors to determine what actions may be required to ensure that the driver, other motorists, and pedestrians remain safe on the road. A reexamination does not mean you will automatically lose your driver license. Frequently, recommendations can be made that allow you to keep your license and continue driving safely.

If you are scheduled for a medical or vision reexamination, you may be asked to have your physician complete a:

- Physician's Statement of Examination (DI-4P), or a
- Vision Specialist's Statement of Examination (DI-4V)

The completed forms must be brought with you when you attend your reexamination.

### At Your Reexamination

During your reexamination, you may be asked to complete one or more of the following tests: vision, road sign identification, written knowledge and an on-the-road driving test. A driver assessment analyst will evaluate your abilities based on the information provided by your physician and your performance on the tests.



The analyst will then determine if any licensing controls are necessary. Licensing controls can range from requiring special equipment, to specifying driving times and destinations, to suspending or revoking your driver license. The analyst will also determine if it will be necessary for you to attend any subsequent reexaminations.

Failure to report for a reexamination will result in the suspension of your driver license until you contact the department and appear for the reexam.

## No-Fee Identification Cards

Since the driver license is often your primary means of identification, its loss often means you will not have a convenient form of photo identification. You are eligible to receive a free state identification card from the Department of State if:

- You are age 65 or older.
- You have lost your privilege to drive due to a physical or medical reason.

Under Michigan law, a state identification card is as valid as a driver license for identification and must be accepted by all businesses.



# Finding Alternate Transportation

**D**epending on where you live, there are often many ways of getting around your community without having to use your own car. Learn what is available in your community. Potential services include:

- City buses or other public transit systems.
- Taxicabs and personalized driver services.
- If public transportation is available in your area, ask a friend to accompany you on a few rides. Riding public transportation with someone who knows how to use the service may make you feel more secure.
- Ask questions about the services and schedules of each type of transportation available to you, including whether they offer evening or weekend rides.
- The costs associated with taxi cabs and other fee-for-hire transportation services can be offset by the savings you'll realize once you're no longer paying for owning, maintaining, insuring and parking your car.
- Using alternate transportation releases you from the worries of driving and parking your own car.
- Contact your local Area Agency on Aging for transportation services and benefits you might not be aware of.

## Resources

**I**nformation on alternative transportation and other services for seniors can be found through the following sources:

- The Eldercare Locator is a nationwide, directory assistance service designed to identify local resources for the aging. Call 800-677-1116 toll free or visit their web site at [www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov).
- The Michigan Office of Services to the Aging can be contacted by calling 517-373-8230, or through the State of Michigan web site at [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov) — click on “Family, Health and Safety” button on the left, and then on “Senior Services.” An online Senior Resource Directory can help locate local transportation services.
- Information about public transportation can be found on the Michigan Department of Transportation web site at [www.michigan.gov/mdot](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot) — click on “Roads & Travel,” and then “Public Transit Providers List” under “Related Links.”
- A list of organizations that provide courses in defensive driving for drivers in need of medical rehabilitation is available through the Michigan Department of State at 517-241-6880, or through the State of Michigan web site at [www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos)